

Overview & Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 10th January, 2013
6.00 - 7.40 pm

Attendees	
Councillors:	Duncan Smith (Chair), Klara Sudbury (Vice-Chair), Nigel Britter, Andrew Chard, Rob Garnham, Colin Hay, Helena McCloskey, Ian Bickerton and Jo Teakle
Also in attendance:	Councillor Penny Hall, Councillor Charles Stewart, Councillor Anne Regan, Councillor Steve Jordan, Councillor Peter Jeffries and Councillor Roger Whyborn

Extract of Minutes

1. REPORT OF THE SCRUTINY TASK GROUP - ALLOTMENTS

The chair of the scrutiny task group, Councillor Anne Regan, introduced their final report on allotments. In her introduction she thanked members of the working group and the officers who had contributed to this review, in particular Beverly Thomas from Democratic Services and Adam Reynolds and Emma from the allotments team who had helped the working group understand the complexities of allotments. The working group had produced a comprehensive set of recommendations which they hoped recognized the needs of the public, allotment holders and those on the waiting list. The chair also added that allotment holders should be encouraged to join the Allotments Association, not least because it offered good value insurance.

As this was such an important issue, the working group wished to add a further recommendation 11 -that the scrutiny task group should be reconvened after a period of 12 months to review the implementation of the recommendations.

In the discussion that followed, members commended the task group for an excellent report and particularly liked the inclusion of photographs. They welcomed the clarity on the legal requirements for provision of allotments which had confirmed that the responsibility for the provision of allotments in parished areas rested clearly with the parish councils. They were satisfied that the original terms of reference had been met.

Councillor Garnham suggested some additional wording in recommendation 9 given that the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan was some way off. The amended recommendation would read as follows:

Rec 9 : that consideration be given to an allotment provision and enhancement policy in the emerging Cheltenham Local Plan and in the meantime planning officers should include the provision of allotments as a subject for discussion with developers at the pre-application stage.

Adam Reynolds advised that there had already been discussions with some developers about including allotment space in their proposed developments and there was a willingness to consider this and a positive response had been received for the new development in the south of the town.

Councillor Hay, as a member of the working group, had reflected further on the recommendations since their report had been finalised. He thought it was important that the authority should encourage people to grow their own food on allotments both for the health benefits but particularly in the context of global food shortages in the medium to long term. He suggested that this could be brought out more strongly in the report. The working group had also considered the use of smaller parcels of land for the provision of both statutory and non-statutory allotments and he felt that the Cabinet Member should be recommended to look into this further.

Another member suggested that there could be more information on the council's website to encourage and guide allotment holders which could help avoid some of the problems of allotments falling into disuse.

Resolved that

- 1. The recommendations be endorsed with the amended recommendation 9 and noting the additional points regarding the health benefits of growing food and the use of parcels of land for statutory and non statutory allotments.**
- 2. The report be forwarded to Council for debate and then on to Cabinet to consider the recommendations.**

Duncan Smith
Chairman